Title: Effective Interagency Collaboration and the Use of the Computerized Metadata Inventory Tool

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Keywords: databases, hazards, health outcomes, computerized inventory tool

Background: The Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DHMH) and the Maryland Department of Environment (MDE) worked together to develop a computerized tool for metadata collection. This poster presentation will show how effective collaboration can facilitate the selection and evaluation of environmental hazard and health outcome data sets for subsequent use in linkage studies.

Objective: Collaboratively develop a computerized metadata tool that can allow for the efficient collection and identification of environmental hazard and health outcome data sources.

Methods: A target list of databases was generated between the two agencies. Targeted database managers were contacted in advance and informed of the project and purpose of metadata collection. Representatives from MDE and DHMH conducted in person interviews using this tool. Workflow was detailed when time permitted. A team met to discuss the tool and make changes with collection when necessary.

Results: Successful in person interviews were conducted at both agencies. The computerized tool helped to guide the team through a standard set of questions and permitted carrying out more efficient interviews. Persons interviewed responded well to the metadata tool and were impressed by its design.

Conclusions: Conducting the interviews in person helped us to focus on strengthening relationships with database managers. We were able to better identify data sources for our demonstration projects.

Evaluation: Effective collaboration between two agencies can facilitate the identification and cataloging of available environmental hazard and health outcome databases. The tool is being considered as a model by other agencies as a method for collecting metadata. The metadata inventory tool can be presented using a paper questionnaire, laptop or over the Internet.